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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release to PM's, NOVEMBER 8, 1956

FWS REPORTS 1956 SALMON PACK 25 PERCENT HIGHER THAN THAT OF 1955

Red salmon, coming back to their spawning grounds in numbers reminiscent of other days, spearheaded the 1956 Alaska salmon pack to an increase of more than 25 percent over that of 1955, John L. Farley, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, said today.

Preliminary figures indicate a 1956 pack of 2,989,030 standard cases, or 600,000 cases above the 1955 total, and not far behind the 3,094,753 cases of 1954. While the pack is still below the long-term average, the trend which has been generally down since 1943 appears to have been arrested by the conservation measures which are now in effect, Mr. Farley said.

Pink salmon still have "to turn the corner," but Fish and Wildlife Service officials report that current conservation practices, especially in Prince William Sound and southeastern Alaska, demonstrated their effectiveness in 1956.

One very encouraging aspect of the 1956 run is that escapement of both red and pink salmon to the spawning grounds in most areas was well above the average of recent years, a fact which portends well for the fisheries of future years. The total red salmon run in the Naknek-Kvichak section of Bristol Bay was approximately 15 million fish, of which 11 million avoided the nets and kept on toward the spawning grounds. Heavy escapements of red salmon are reported in the Nelson Lagoon and Sandy Lake and other places along the Peninsula. Chignik experienced a good escapement of red salmon and in Cook Inlet the escapement is reported to have exceeded anything achieved in recent years; that of Prince William Sound pink salmon was reported excellent, while escapement of that species in southeastern Alaska is listed as good to excellent.

Since the life cycle of the salmon varies from two years with the pinks to four to six years with the reds, results of the 1956 escapements will be reflected in the runs of 1958 and later years.

Little is known of that part of the salmon's life spent at sea but biological studies are being made on this phase of its life history at the present time. The pink salmon caught this year were smaller than average, going 22 to 25 to the case instead of the usual 17 or 18.

Conservation measures being practiced at the present time include provisions for adequate escapement, better protection of the spawning beds, reduction of predators, stream clearance, etc. Biological research include: numerous studies on depredation and other natural factors which affect the salmon from the time the mature fish reach the spawning beds until the young ones begin their life in the ocean. In addition, there are now oceanographic and biological studies to determine what conditions effect salmon at sea.

A breakdown on the 1956 pack in standard cases with 1955 figures in parenthesis follows: Red, 992,865 (620,488); chum, 690,430 (365,205); pink, 1,159,589 (1,244,663); coho, 99,916 (110,635); king, 46,231 (47,140).

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